Stem Cell Research

1260. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have realized the potential of stem-cell research in the country and is establishing centres for study of stem-cell transplant biology in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that Government are bringing out a national policy for regulation and application of stem-cell research in the country;

(d) whether there is any proposal for constitution of an expert committee to monitor and review the research work on stem-cells;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI PANABAKA LAKSHMI): (a) to (f) According to Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) stem cell research in the country is one of the promising areas of biotechnology for "Regenerative Medicine" providing tools to repair of replace tissues or cells damaged by injuries or diseases, like heart diseases, stroke, spinal injuries, Diabetes mellitus, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, retinal degeneration and muscular dystrophy etc. Presently more than 20 Government and private institutions are working in different areas of stem cell research *e.g.* AIIMS, Delhi; NIRRH, Mumbai; NII, Delhi; CLRD, Hyderabad; CMC, Vellore; KEM, Mumbai; PGI, Chandigarh etc.

ICMR has revised the Guidelines for Stem Cell Research and Regulation in consultation with Department of Biotechnology (DBT). These guidelines are known as Draft Guidelines for stem cell research and therapy, 2006 which envisage establishment of an National Apex Committee for stem cell research and therapy to monitor and oversee the activities under stem cell research particularly activities related to embryonic stem cells research as it involves ethical and social issues. An Institutional Committee for stem cell research and therapy has been suggested for monitoring research areas involving adult, umbilical cord blood and fetal stem cell research at the institutional level after obtaining the approval of the Ethics Committee.